

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 437

FL 025 412

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TITLE A Gestalt Approach to Text Manipulation in Translation.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 14p.; Document contains light print.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Discourse Analysis; Foreign Countries; *Interpretive Skills; *Language Patterns; *Language Processing; *Psychological Patterns; Second Languages; *Translation
IDENTIFIERS *Gestalt Psychology

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the issue of unconscious manipulation in translation. The translator engages in creating new text subject to the principles of totality and part-whole relations. The closer the parts and relations to those of the source text (ST), the more related this new whole will be to the former one. In attempting to preserve ST semantic content, the translator builds on his or her own interpretation of it, which is subject to his or her previous pattern completion attempts: adding and deleting parts and assuming new relations between them to compensate for whatever is vague or implicit, or whatever he or she missed in the ST. The translator shapes the target text (TT), its parts and relations to produce a text conforming to all standards of textuality. All types of over-translations, under-translations, and manipulative shifts are affected not only by linguistic mismatches, but also by the translator's pattern completion attempt and tendency to create a whole. When he or she fails to complete the whole, he or she experiences cognitive dissonance. Then, motivated by the Gestalt theory law of tendency and the desire to move toward consonance, he or she fills in the gaps, completes the parts, and even exerts new relationships between them to create a whole and satisfy the need for stability and consonance. Contains 13 references. (MSE)

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A Gestalt Approach To Text Manipulation In Translation

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1998

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A Gestalt Approach To Text Manipulation

In Translation

The concept of manipulation in translation has inspired numerous studies in the past decade (Hermans 1985, Bassnett 1987, Bassnett & Leleaver 1990, Venuti 1992, & others). Most of these studies have focused on the role of manipulation in translation, how it affects the TT as a product, and what roles the manipulated TT plays in the TL community.

Associated with these interpretations of the term is the nature of the processes which lead to manipulation. However, little effort has been made to explore these processes and how manipulative shifts take place. Indeed further development of the concept of manipulation seems to require, among other things, an examination of the processes at work. The present paper is an attempt to explore the issue of unconscious manipulation.

Manipulating texts in translation seems to result from the activation of at least two types of processes: a conscious process, and an unconscious one. The conscious process leads to conscious

manipulation intentionally carried out by the translator under the influence of various social, political and other factors. The unconscious process, which leads to unconscious manipulation is, at least in part, a psychological phenomenon, and occurs under the influence of psychological factors.

One of the recent references to the distinction between these two processes is made by Hatim & Mason (1997: 144), who assert that the translator's intervention might be consciously or unconsciously filtered. However in a related discussion of Venuti's concept of domestication, they conclude that since both processes yield in the same result, "it hardly matters whether the process is conscious or unwitting". This of course holds true if the product of these processes is to be considered merely as a social and cultural phenomenon. But if this same product is to be taken at the same time as an evidence of what probably goes on in the mind of the translator, to which we have no direct access (see Hatim & Mason 1997: 170), then it deserves more attention and requires thorough examination.

A Gestalt Perspective

Fundamental to Gestalt psychology are the two interrelated concepts of "**pattern**" and "**pattern completion** (closure)", both of which can be applied to text - processing and text - creation in translation.

Pattern As Text

Reber (1985: 522) defines "**pattern**" as:

A configuration or grouping of parts or elements with a coherent structure...

In this sense, the connotation is that the separate parts of an array, although distinguishable, form a coherent, integrated whole....

In Eysenck's words (1975: 400 - 403) the totality of this whole is the combination of all its parts, and exists only if:

- a) none of these parts is lacking, and
- b) the relationship between them is not interrupted anywhere.

In this sense the concept of Pattern corresponds to the concept of text in that a text is similarly a coherent, integrated whole made up of distinguishable, yet related parts, whose totality is subject to both the existence of all its parts and an uninterrupted relation between them.

In a text, which is a whole, sentences form "parts". The relationship between these parts is manifested in the form of standards of textuality (see Beaugrande & Dressler 1981), including cohesion, coherence and intertextuality. Lack of any one of these standards interrupts the relationship between the parts in a text and affects its totality. In this perspective the ST and the TT form two wholes which are independent of one another, because each is a creation in a different language, and at the same time related, because not only they share the invariant core of meaning but also they relate to one another through intertextuality. The totality of each is maintained only when conditions (a) and (b) are met.

In the actual process of translating, the translator uses the invariant core of meaning present in one whole (ST) to create new whole (TT). Translating is therefore creating a new whole from the substance of a former one.

Pattern Completion

Reber (1985: 127) defines "pattern completion" as:

One of the several Gestalt laws of organization.

(4)

It assumes an innate tendency to perceive incomplete objects as complete, to close up or fill in gaps in sensory inputs and to view asymmetric and unbalanced stimuli as symmetric and balanced.

Eysenck (1975: 176) refers to the principle of "closure" (**pattern completion**) in Gestalt psychology as:

the subjective "closing of gaps" and the completion of incomplete figures to form wholes.

Both definitions, although originally introduced to clarify how achieving stable percepts is explained by Gestalt psychologists. Can be adapted to text processing in translation.

Pattern completion In Translation

Broadly speaking, the process of translating composes of two stages: interpretation and creation.

Stage One: Interpretation:

As the reader/ translator starts reading the ST, he engages in its interpretation from the very beginning, which in a sense occurs as an interaction between reader and text On the basis of textual features, i.e.

lexical choices, grammatical arrangements, thematic progression, ... etc., the reader/ translator derives a certain meaning from the text and arrives at a certain interpretation of it which extends beyond the text to other areas such as intertextuality and world knowledge. In this sense there exist different readings of a text, since readers differ in their interpretations of the same text.

Pattern Completion As An Interpretive Strategy

As discussed earlier, a text is a Whole comprising of parts and the relationship between them. However all texts include implicit information, so they include gaps. If the reader/ translator misses any of the parts or the relations which form the whole, (s) he arrives at an incomplete picture of what (s) he expects to be a complete whole. Motivated by the Gestalt law of "pattern completion" and the innate tendency to perceive the incomplete as complete, he then unconsciously attempts to fill in the gaps which have rendered the text incomplete. This attempt, were it conscious, would require re- reading of the ST and filling the gaps with textual clues. But when it is unconscious, the reader/ translator is unaware that (s)he is misinterpreting the whole. I assume most erratic readings.

misunderstandings, incorrect inferences and the like come into play at this part of the process. Thus the translator adds new parts to the whole or assumes new relations between the parts on the basis of her/his interpretations of the previous parts and his expectation about the next parts, in order to close up or fill in the gaps and arrive at a whole. In this sense, interpretation of the whole not only controls interpretation of parts, but is at the same time controlled by it.

Stage Two. Creation.

It is commonly believed that the translator reproduces or recreates an original. To reproduce or recreate, the translator has to have the same world view as the original author, to perceive and interpret all phenomena the way he does, and to go through the very same stages the original author went through in creating his original. But no two people can ever be expected to share all these. Above all, philosophically, the conditions of creation can never be repeated. In other words, to reproduce or recreate, the translator has to be the author of the original, creating the very same text under the very same conditions. But even the author of the original can hardly be expected to reproduce the same text, since even if all conditions stay the same, he will have to think and write in another language and

within the linguistic, social and cultural capacities and constraints of that other language.

However, the translator is not the same author. He is another author and therefore creates his piece, which is similar to and derived from the original, but is in itself a new original, thus a new whole inspired by the former one (ST) and subject to the linguistic, social and cultural norms of another language. This new whole is independent of the former one (ST) in that it possesses an organization of its own, controlled by the capacities and constraints of the language in which it appears (TL). Yet it is related to the former one in that:

a) it Shares with it the invariant core of meaning which is formulated anew within, and as part of another whole, in another language.

b) it relates to it through intertextuality, i.e. they both show dependence on recognizable prior texts and text elements (see Hatim & Mason 1997).

Pattern Completion In Creation

The translator engages in creating a new text as he starts translating. This new text is subject to the principles of totality and part - whole relations. The closer the parts and their relations to the parts and relations of the former whole (ST), the more related this new whole will be to the former one. In her / his attempt to preserve the semantic content (invariant core of meaning) of the ST, the translator builds up this new whole on his own interpretation of the ST, which is subject to his previous pattern completion attempts: addition and deletion of parts and assuming new relations between them to compensate for whatever is vague or implicit, or whatever he missed in the ST. So (s)he shapes up the TT, its parts and relations in an attempt to produce a text which conforms of all the standards of textuality.

I assume all types of over - translations, under - translations and manipulative shifts not only are affected by linguistic mismatches, but are basically influenced by the translator's pattern completion attempts and her/ his tendency to create a whole, and thus to overcome what Festinger (1952) called **cognitive dissonance**. According to him,

consonance (see krech 1962). In this perspective, when the translator fails to complete her/ his whole, (s) he experiences cognitive dissonance. Then, motivated by the Gestalt law of tendency and also by her/ his desire to overcome dissonance and move toward consonance, (s) he fills in the gaps, completes the parts and even exerts new relations between them to come up with a whole and satisfy his need for stability and consonance.

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